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**MALVINAS 1982.
SYMMETRICAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND OVERREACTIONS
LEAD THE WAY TO WAR**

BY

**COLONEL SERGIO FERNANDEZ
Argentine Army**

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Colonel Sergio Fernández
Argentine Army

Colonel (R) USMC Brian Moore
Project Advisor

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U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

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ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

In 1982 Argentina and the United Kingdom faced an unwanted war for the sovereignty over the Malvinas, Georgias and Sandwich del Sur Islands. A 149 years territorial conflict, developed into a high-intensity war only few days a minor incident had occurred in a remote and isolated place called Leith, in Georgias del Sur.

The study analyzes and evaluates the information from first sources available in 2002, but discarding opinions, false information or misinterpretations from other authors.

The study describes the evolution of the conflict, the daily development of the crisis generated in Georgias based on their protagonists' testimonies and documents. It seeks to determine the real facts, decisions, and declarations that led two friendly nations to war.

Twenty years ago, the forces were marching south in order to solve an old issue over the disputed archipelagos. Today, as in the past, the central issue of sovereignty remains unsolved due to British intransigency. It is time to learn the real lessons of this unwanted, misunderstood war.

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PREFACE

In many parts of the world, especially in the U.S.A. the 1982 conflict between Argentina and Great Britain over sovereignty, of the Malvinas, Georgias del Sur and Sandwich del Sur Islands is best or solely known from British sources writers, of course, in English. In effect, the Argentine perspective is largely undisclosed to the English speaking world.

Most Argentine authors have not been translated into English, so their books and articles are unavailable to the English speakers, who thus have heard or seen only one side of the story.

There are numerous interpretations of the facts, decisions, or declarations in those days. However, few valuable documents and public declarations are available from the people involved in the decision making process. In Argentina, because of the outcome of the war and the ensuing change of government, there was a deeper interest in understanding the reasons and causes for the crisis and the war. Even official papers and secret documents have come to light in Argentina.

In Great Britain, on the contrary, the Official Secrets Law protects sensitive information from being disclosed. So, documents pertaining to British intentions, planning, decisions and actions are kept from public scouting. But for this, it will be necessary to wait for the next generation to find the necessary answers.

This study does not pretend to change the events that occurred in 1982, nor their consequences. Rather, this study offers a fuller interpretation of the circumstances that lead the two nations to the Malvinas War. It explores all the first-hand sources available today, as we commemorate the twentieth anniversary of those difficult but heroic days.

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**MALVINAS 1982.
SYMMETRICAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND OVERREACTIONS
LEAD THE WAY TO WAR**

INTRODUCTION

For most, the conflict between United Kingdom (UK) and Argentina started on April 2, 1982. But even without going deep into the long-standing roots of the dispute, this sudden and strange war really began during the previous two week period in March.

This analysis uses the denomination Falkland/Malvinas, which officially reflects the sovereignty issue, or Malvinas Islands, Georgias del Sur Islands and Sandwich del Sur Islands - which are the original Argentine geographic designations. We do not accept the single referent Falkland because this is not a translation of the original in Spanish. We will use it only for textual transcriptions. We can accept South Georgia and South Sandwich because they are similar to the originals.

For the purpose of this study and for the treatment of the sovereignty question, we can refer to the disputed territories as Malvinas (only), or Malvinas, Georgias and Sandwich del Sur Islands. No matter which designations are used, the controversy is centered on the three archipelagos, as was stated in all the UN Resolutions, with consent of both Argentina and the United Kingdom. For geographical or historical references, we will name each place separately.

In order to develop a comprehensive and rational analysis, we must understand that the Islas Malvinas, Georgias del Sur and Sandwich del Sur are not British territory. Indeed the British Government had concurred since 1965 in the UN that they are a disputed area, which gives them a particular status. The three Archipelagos are currently Argentine territories occupied by the UK by the use of force. Argentina along with many other countries, including the United States of America recognizes no British sovereignty over these territories.

So, the UK has no legal right to impose its regulations on these territories. No applicable British Law or administrative procedures are universally accepted to warrant UK occupation of the territories. The only way to resolve the issue is through agreements or armed conflict. UK has solved the entire question only by the use of force, despite U.N. Resolution 2065 (1965), which requested the two countries to negotiate the issue of sovereignty. As of today, the issue is unresolved.

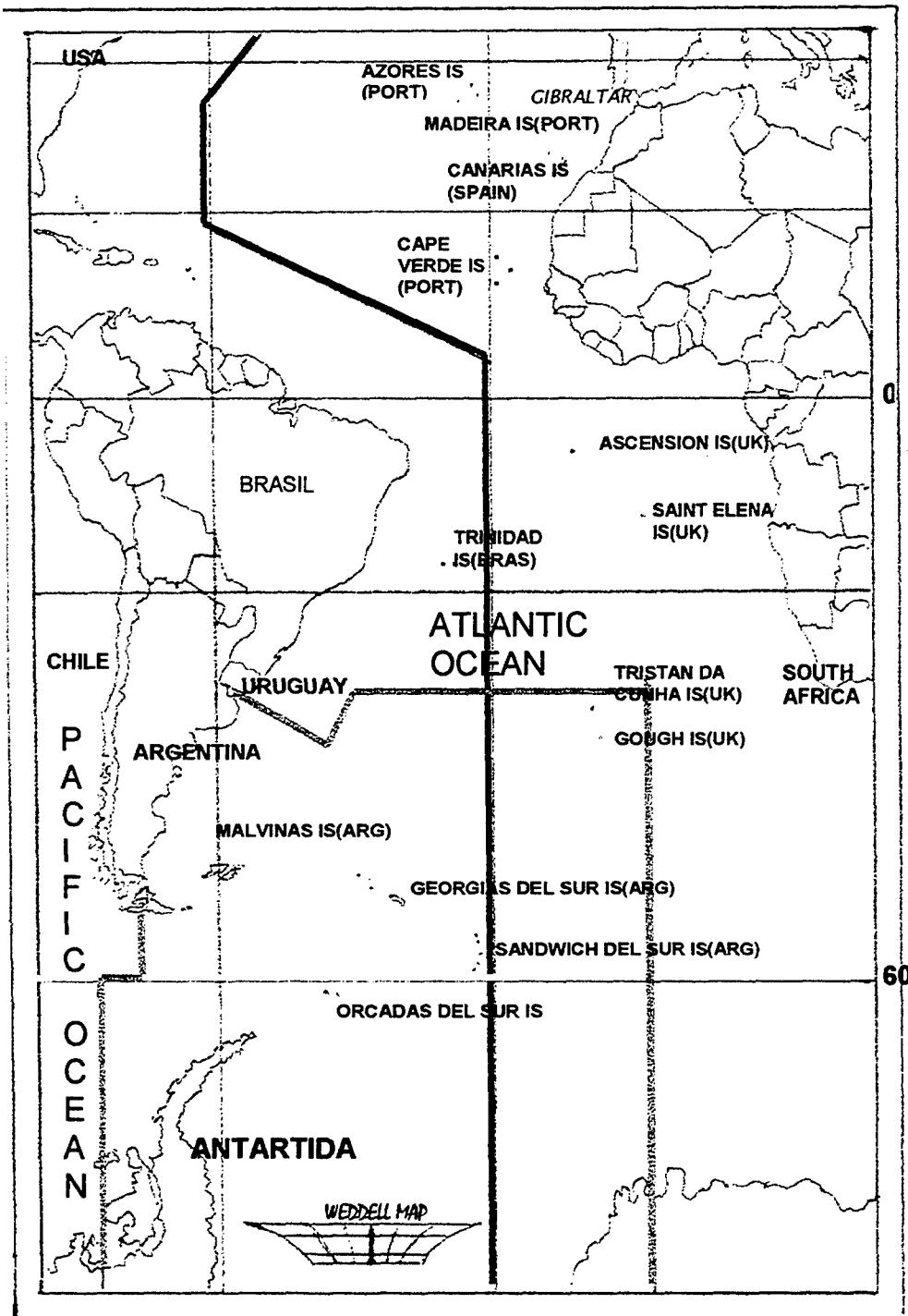


FIGURE 1. THE SOUTH ATLANTIC OCEAN MAP SHOWS THE ARCHIPELAGOS IN DISPUTE, THE EASTERN LIMIT OF THE INTER-AMERICAN RECIPROCAL DEFENSE TREATY AREA (RED), THE NORTHERN LIMIT OF THE ANTARCTIC TREATY AREA (YELLOW) AND THE AREA OF ARGENTINE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MARITIME AND AIR SEARCH AND RESCUE (BLUE).

The area in dispute is one of the most isolated and sparsely populated regions in the planet, especially Georgias del Sur and Sandwich del Sur Islands, which are far from any direct contact with the rest of the world. Their isolation has contributed to anonymity and widespread ignorance of the facts of the dispute.

With only 13 semi-permanent British Antarctic Service (BAS) inhabitants in 1982, the major island, San Pedro, is a high altitude ridge in the middle of the South Atlantic Ocean, covered with glaciers and snow for most of the year. Chilly winds, cloudy skies and stormy seas enshroud the island. The most relevant evidence of human activity remains the old large abandoned factories, jetties, and sunken ships on the shore - remnants of the golden era of whaling exploitation.

OBJECTIVE

This study argues that a low-level conflict was escalated beyond control of both actors, starting with deliberate and well concealed British aggression. This study seeks to determine and clarify facts, information, statements, orders, evaluations and perceptions at the decision-makers' levels in both countries, as they occurred in 1982. Also, it provides additional post-conflict information from firsthand sources, leaders and participants, as well as documents.

PREVIOUS ACTIONS

This long-standing conflict started in 1833, with the British invasion of Malvinas and expulsion of the Argentine population, who during 13 years exercised sovereignty and for 23 years administrative control by the United Provinces of the River Plate.¹

There was a previous British presence in Port Egmont settlement between 1765 and 1770, along with the French and Spanish settlements. In effect, the British surreptitiously occupied Spanish territory, by surprise. Then, Spain forcibly expelled the intruders on June 10, 1770. After that, the British remained between 1771 and 1774 on tiny Saunders Island, although Spain ruled the Islands. The Spanish government agreed to compensate the British for the expulsion of 1770, yielding their presence in Port Egmont.

Spain ruled the Islands as part of the Viceroyalty of Peru until 1776. They then became part of the Viceroyalty of the River Plate for more than 55 years until 1811, when the garrison was withdrawn because of the Argentine Independence War.

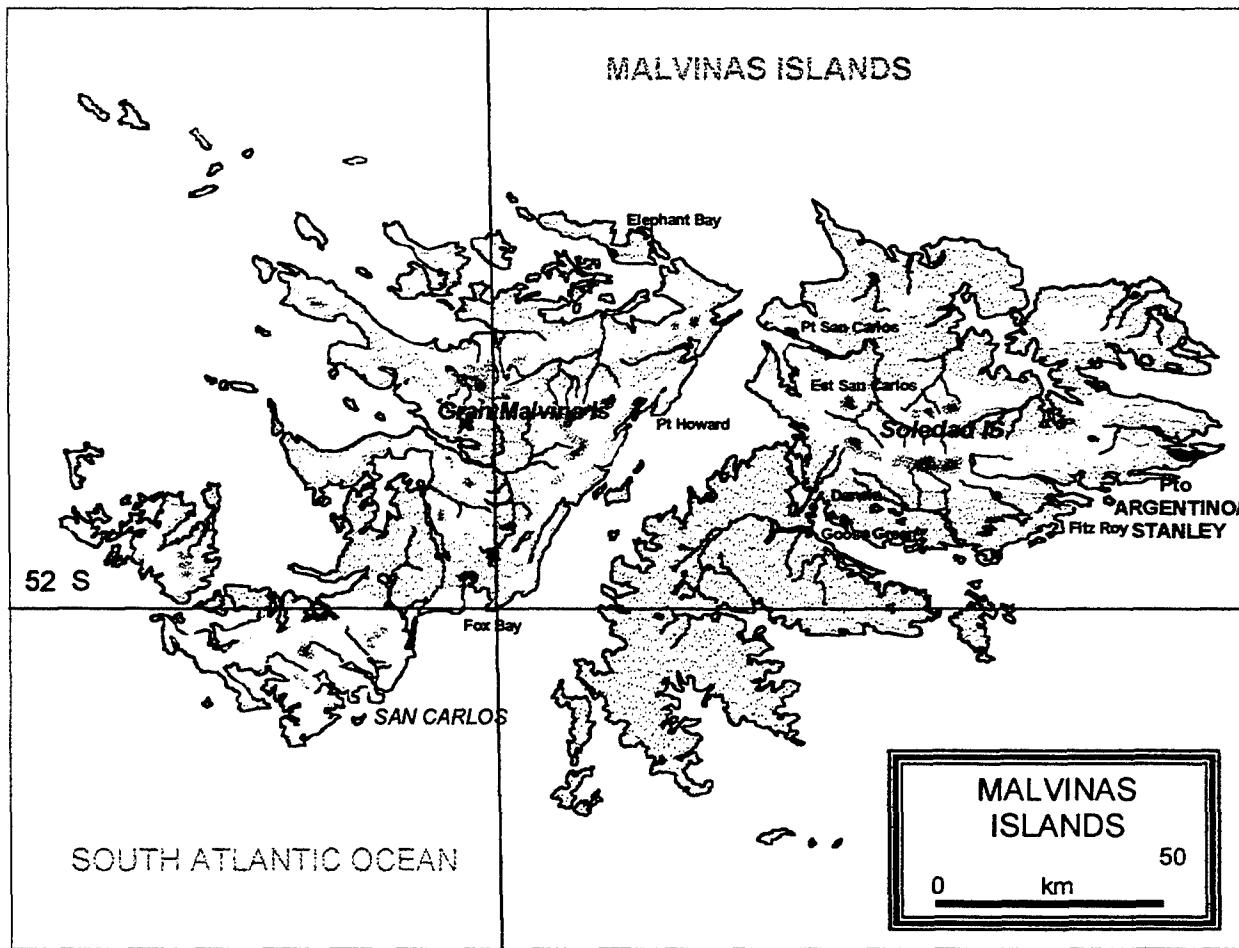


FIGURE 2. THE MALVINAS ISLANDS AND ITS FRAGMENTED GEOGRAPHY.

Argentina then exercised sovereignty rights in administrative ways after 1810. Four years after Argentine Independence, Captain David Jewett formally installed Argentine rule of the islands in 1820. For thirteen years Argentina effectively ruled the islands, despite the attack and the destruction of the Argentine settlement in 1831 by the frigate *USS Lexington*, acting in reprisal for the imprisonment of US seamen who were illegally fishing in the islands. This act of aggression was never acknowledged by an apology or compensation by the US government.²

The British intruded in Spanish territory during the period 1765-1770 and 1771-1774. Then in 1790 Spain and Great Britain signed the Nootka Sound Convention, in which England renounced colonialism in South America. Spain maintained sovereignty over the islands until her empire collapsed. Then the islands came under Argentine rule until 1833, when the Royal Navy seized them. This occupation of the islands was accomplished against a friendly country, based only on force. As Captain Nicholas Baker, *HMS Endurance* wrote:

Britain had recognized the independence of the United Provinces as early as 1824. Neither that recognition nor the treaty of Amity, Trade and Navigation of 1825 made any mention of the Falklands.³

The Monroe Doctrine, proclaimed in 1823, was never applied to the case of the British invasion of Malvinas Islands in 1833. This U.S. neglect, two years after the *Lexington's* attack, confirms U.S. disregard for Argentine sovereignty.

The British tactic to appropriate Georgias and Sandwich Islands came in a simple administrative internal Letter Patent of 1908, supported again by military power. This first public declaration was blatantly imperialistic; it claimed all the Argentinean and Chilean Islands except Tierra del Fuego on the continent, and territory elsewhere. It took Argentina nine years to obtain the partial rectification of this fraudulent claim, but the situation regarding Georgias and Sandwich del Sur remained unsolved.

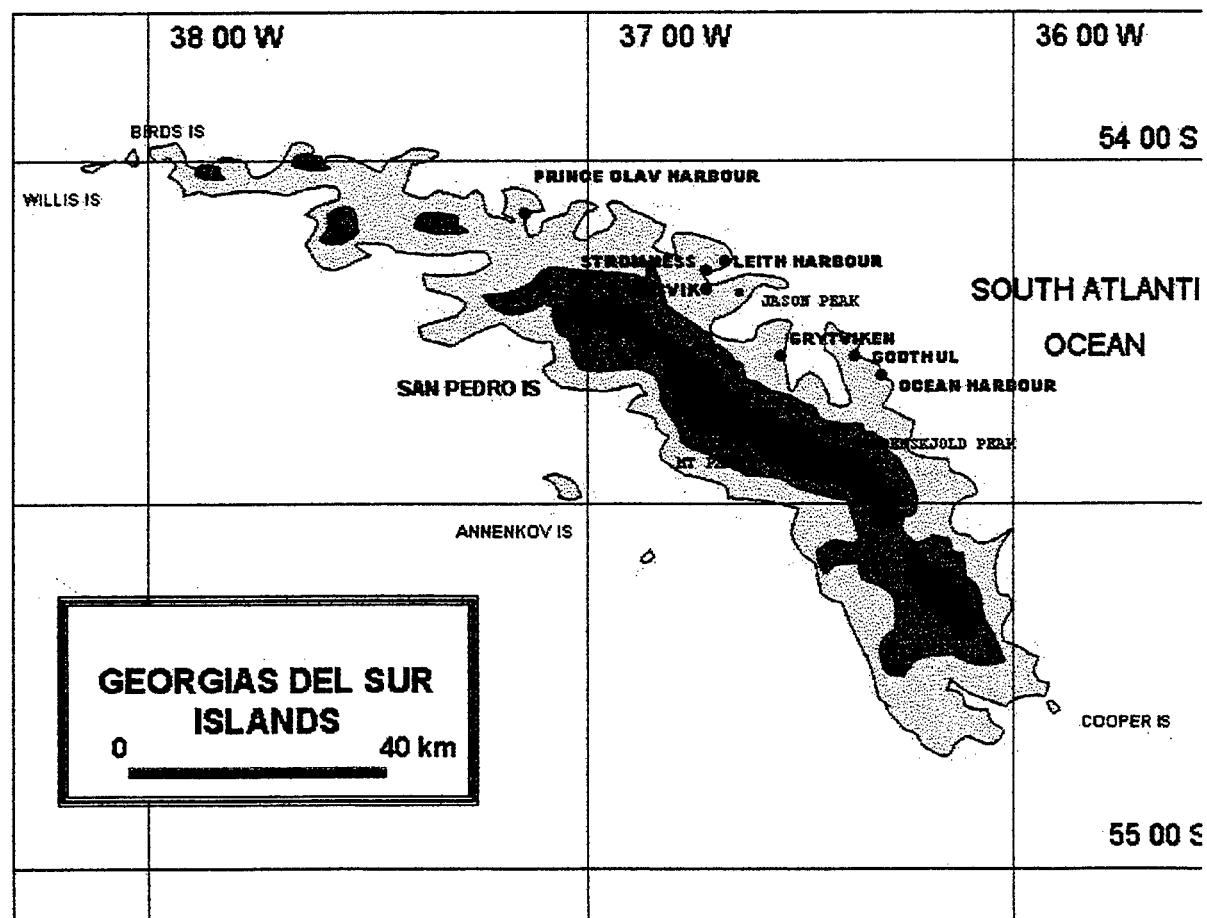


FIGURE 3. GEORGIAS DEL SUR ISLANDS AND THE FORMER WHALE STATIONS.

The initial presence of the Argentine Fishery Company operating in Georgias Islands since 1904 was ignored in this claim, as was the Meteorological Station of the Argentine National Meteorological Service, which strangely remained operating until 1950. Finally, in 1964, there appeared to be a way to restore legal Argentine possession of the islands. Negotiations in the UN were undertaken between Argentina and the United Kingdom about the primary issue: the sovereignty on the Falkland/Malvinas, Georgias del Sur and Sandwich del Sur Islands. But curiously UN Resolutions about sovereignty were delayed and then frustrated three times when an acceptable solution seemed in sight, due to British internal conflicts. Now more than 37 years of UN negotiations and resolutions have proved fruitless. Indeed the UK has ignored them.⁴

An agreement was almost achieved in 1968, but British lobbying against the process was effective, so the Foreign Office withdrew the proposal. This recent opportunity was lost due to domestic British political differences. After the failure of the 1968 Memorandum of Understanding agreement, the UK Government introduced a new element into the negotiations. In contradiction with the UN Resolutions ("taking in account the **interests** of the population") the British decided to act upon the "**wishes**" of the islanders (all of British origin and dependent on UK support) as the condition under which they would discuss sovereignty. This empowered British subjects as arbiters of a conflict between their country and Argentina. The islanders are UK citizens introduced into the islands after the Argentine inhabitants were expelled; they are not a colonized native population. The British position on their "wishes" is an inadmissible and ridiculous pretension. But it is, even today, the official strategy of the UK, and certainly not a reasonable position for any negotiation. Original UN Resolutions have remained unchanged in spite of this pretension. They have been reinforced by post-war Resolutions in the same terms. Accordingly, negotiations should be carried out through their terms.

UN Resolution 2353 (1968), for a similar case in Gibraltar, clearly expressed that self-determination could not be applied when the colonial situation affected the territorial integrity of one state, as in the Malvinas case.⁵

The situation had improved since 1971 with the Communications agreement. Argentina began to support the islands' development. Also personal relationships with the continent became more frequent, reducing the islands' isolation.

Since 1976 the situation had changed substantially. Unsuccessful negotiations, coupled with the prospect of oil exploration in the area without Argentine agreement, further stained relations. Also, warrant ambassadors retired. The *Shackleton* research ship entered the area and was fired upon by an Argentine destroyer because of her resistance to be inspected. The

incident was solved through discussion. Finally, Argentina managed to establish a permanent scientific base in the Sandwich del Sur Islands, more precisely in Thule del Sur Island. Britain lodged a protest and Argentina rejected it.

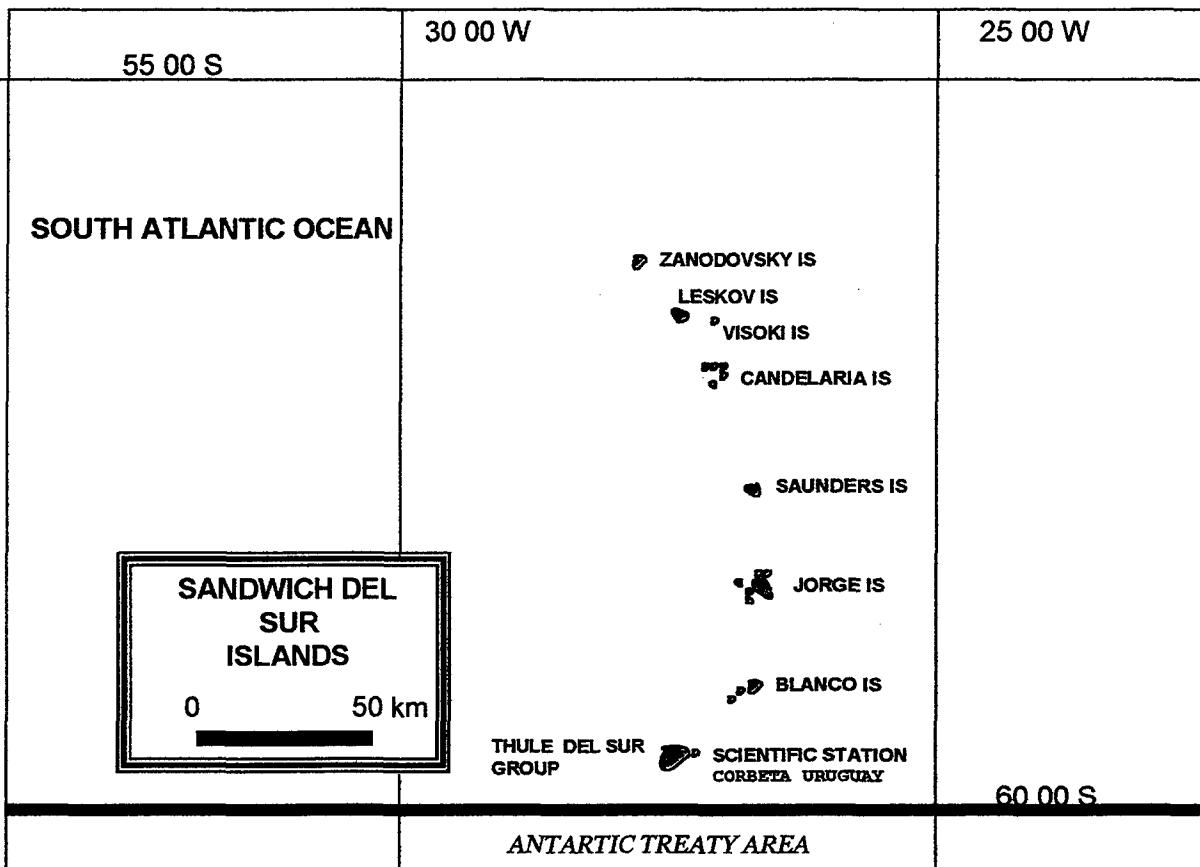


FIGURE 4. SANDWICH DEL SUR ISLANDS, THE SOUTHERNMOST PLACE BEFORE ENTRING THE ANTARCTIC AREA.

Tensions reached the boiling point in 1977, when the British sent a nuclear submarine and support units to the South Atlantic, facing what they described as Argentine military pressure. For Argentina, the presence of a nuclear submarine in the area meant aggression. But the threat dissipated. Nothing happened and the mission was eventually canceled. So in 1977, Argentina was not deterred by the British threat. Nonetheless, this threat powerfully affected decisions made in 1982.

Even in 1977 the British proposed negotiations, which clearly included sovereignty. In spite of some internal resistance in the UK, Mr. Rowlands, Secretary of the Foreign Office (FO), visited the Islands to explain the process and found some signs of cooperation. But again the lobby acted against the Government and the proposal was withdrawn.

The situation in Thule remained in a desirably calm for both countries despite media coverage in 1978. Even then, both countries reacted only minimally.

Relations were restored to the normal status in 1978, and ambassadors were exchanged. Another attempt to solve the question came in 1980, when Mr. Nicholas Ridley of the FO visited the Islands with a lease-back proposal. Demonstrations by less than 300 vociferous islanders (less than one sixth of the population) and a coordinated lobbying action in the Parliament denied any solution. UK policy to maintain sovereign control thus remained unchanged.

Argentina had reason enough to feel frustration and not to trust British good faith or to assume a reasonable position. Again, Argentina was treated cavalierly in efforts to resolve the issue.

The options initially presented to the Thatcher Government in 1979 had been narrowed to only one: delay any solution. Meaningful negotiations ended in January 1981, with a British decision.⁶

So far I could see the talks in New York were a flop. I found this frustrating because I had by now lost count of the times I had been told that this was going to be the beginning of a permanent solution to the Falklands dispute. New York, it was now clear, was little more than another vehicle for procrastination.

This discouraging opinion could have been expressed by any Argentine in those days. In fact, it belongs to Nicholas Baker, the *Endurance's* Captain.⁷

Early in 1982, the Thatcher Government was facing a crisis in popularity. The British economy was failing; social protests were increasing. In Argentina, a new government headed by General Galtieri as President had been installed in December 1981. He too shared Thatcher's economic and political woes. Neither had enough strength to overcome domestic disapproval of their leadership.

Some analysts assert that the crisis was caused only by Argentine military pressure. This is a simplistic interpretation, not supported by reality.

Military planning in both countries is routine. It does not justify provocation, aggression, or preventive attacks. Both nations had long-standing plans to defend their interests in the islands. Between May and September 1981, before the conflict exploded, UK had developed a Contingency Plan for action in the area. But the Argentine planning process started only in January 1982, long after the UK plan was developed.

By March 1982, provisions for any Argentina military planning were far from being complete. Only the preliminary plan had been finished by March 15, and no military measures had been taken. Political and diplomatic measures were at the forefront. The timetable placed

May or June as the earliest date for any action and was merely a planning date. No decision had been taken for any military activities. Even plans for the less significant Operation Alfa, designed to insert a scientific base in Georgias during that year, had been canceled or at least delayed, because it was clear that this could be a serious interference with the Malvinas strategy. In short, not a single provocative or aggressive action was in the works.

A related issue is the Davidoff scrap metal removal enterprise, "Georgias del Sur S.A". Constantino Sergio Davidoff's contract and ensuing activities during the period 1978/1981 were absolutely legal and well-known to British authorities in Edinburgh, in London, as well as in Port Stanley. He had no relations with the Argentine Navy or the Argentine Government, as was claimed by the British, even when his commercial activities in Georgias could have been capitalized by Argentina if his personnel would have stayed in the island for the entire time-two years-they were expected. Argentine workers could have been the most important, if not the only semi-permanent population in Georgias for the two years coming if the BAS base could have been inactivated, as was proposed in 1981. Davidoff had tried to charter *HMS Endurance* for his project, but this was not possible. He then chartered the Argentine icebreaker *ARA Almirante Irizar* for an initial reconnaissance at Leith, Georgias del Sur Islands, on 20 December, 1981. Although the ship did not enter Grytviken as the British claimed, the voyage triggered a protest which was rejected by Argentina. Coincidentally, the *Endurance* was in Grytviken on the same day. These "new" British administrative procedures were far from those established in the 1971 Agreement.

But the December incident had other curious aspects. The British Embassy requested that Governor Hunt disclose the procedures to be followed by Davidoff as he prepared to initiate a second trip, on 23 February, 1982. Governor Hunt strangely failed in provide the information in time for the most important activity managed by the Embassy and his own Office in those days. He stated that he had briefed Mike Hickson, ("Mr Falklands", from British Embassy) during his visit to Stanley in March 1982. And Mr. Hickson was still in the Islands when the second journey with Davidoff's men on board the transport *ARA Bahia Buen Suceso* departed the 11of March. The British Embassy in Buenos Aires never received the requested information. The Governor delayed forwarding the vital information for more than 16 days...David Joy was responsible to give Davidoff guidance. But all that Davidoff knew was that his ship should first report to Grytviken for entry purposes.⁸

Indeed the Foreign Office had instructed Governor Hunt not to institute proceedings, which:

would risk provoking a most serious incident which could escalate and have an unforeseeable outcome.⁹

So Davidoff's second shipment of workers to Georgias was en route. The British Embassy in Buenos Aires had been properly notified and the personnel list had been provided. Their normal documentation was issued by the Argentine Foreign Relations Ministry, they carried White Cards in accord with the Communications Agreement 1971.

In Stanley, Malvinas, Captain Adolfo Gaffoglio, the Argentine Naval representative, had been repeatedly queried by Mr. Hunt about Davidoff's activities the previous week. Not by chance, the *HMS Endurance* was also cruising in the area of Georgias since the 15th, searching the sea, showing some signs of frustration.

The French yacht *Cinc Gars Pour*, which reached the islands after being in grave peril on 14 March, experienced a cold reception by the members of the BAS, usually hospitable people. But the BAS refused to assist the French in getting their yacht repaired.

This was the situation on 16 March, 1982. Conflict was in the air, but wasn't it always there? In Georgias, during the morning, BAS commander Steve Martin was lifted in one of the *Endurance Wasp* helicopters to Leith to deposit one sign temporarily:

British Antarctic Survey – Leith Field Station – Unauthorised entry prohibited.

This prohibition was repeated in Spanish, Russian, Polish and French. The sign was left in the former Station Manager's house, obviously aimed at the expected Argentines. As the crisis evolved, the British cited it as a "justification" for their protests.

THE INCIDENT AND THE CRISIS

17 MARCH

What were the facts that precipitated such sudden and intense crisis?

The *ARA Bahia Buen Suceso*, transporting Davidoff's workers and their cargo, reached Georgias on the 17th. She was an old Argentine ship of the Servicio de Transportes Navales (Naval Transport Service), commanded by a Merchant Navy officer with civilian crew. The ship was unarmed. Captain Osvaldo M Niella's version follows:

...for us this has been one of many sails south. We normally transport passengers and also cargo to different Patagonian ports: to the islands, to Ushuaia, to Malvinas, which we also supported logistically. Well, in this case another port was added for us, San Pedro, on Georgias. We transported...42 passengers...

Simply we went to Georgias in accomplishment of one more voyage.

...We left those people, unloaded their equipment (one bulldozer, one crane, at least all the necessary for this type of task) and we come back. That was all.¹⁰

The diary of Carlos Milette, one of the workers later involved in the Argentine flag issue, reflected the first day on Georgias:

In the morning we entered Stromness Bay. One group of us went ashore with one of the boats. First they went to Stromness where they looked into the conditions for working and the houses' habitability.

After that, they went to Leith Harbour, and in the factory there conditions working were better than in Stromness.¹¹

The whole team of 39 workers (three remained on board because of last minute technical inconveniences) went ashore in Leith.

In Port Stanley there was a farewell party for other British ship, the *John Biscoe*, which was sailing for Montevideo the next day. In Buenos Aires there was no notice about any aspect of the trip. In London, the situation was similar.

18 MARCH

Activities in Leith were normal. The Davidoff team started improving living conditions for and unloading cargo from the *Bahía Buen Suceso*, which took jetty at 9 a.m. Captain Niella recalls.¹²

All participated in repairing the jetty because it was not in good state. The factory being inactive, the jetty was not in use. So, we needed to make some repairs before unloading the equipment.

Unloading was a considerable task: the light equipment consisted in 80 tons of tools, provisions of all types, and medical equipment. In addition there were cranes, bulldozers, boats, tractors and cargo elevators.

Milette continues:

Approximately at 10 a.m. we decided to raise the flag. It was put on a pole made with a broken oar that was tied to a tower where there was a generator...All was done without any pomp or ceremony.¹³

The main actor in this story was another worker, Horacio M Lochi. He raised the flag:

Really, it was a normal thing ...without any bad intention. Do you want me to say something? When I raised it I felt such great emotion... You should have seen how it waved!¹⁴

Lochi and Milette gave their first and last interview after the conflict to *Siete Dias* (Seven Days), an old Argentine magazine, in 1983. They were among the 39 workers arrived at Leith on 17 March, 1982. No military personnel were among them. The British Embassy had the workers roster, so and it is easy to verify that information.¹⁵

Some contemporary pictures portray the workers on Georgias. They were only civilian workers in spite of their "impressive" appearance in winter clothes.

No one in Buenos Aires and London knew about these facts. Meanwhile, the Argentine transport *ARA Bahía Paraiso* left Ushuaia towards Antarctic and Orcadas the same day.

19 MARCH

Miletti's diary continued:

I was sent to work with Carlucci... and with the "old" Poggi; we had an order to inspect the main water pipeline. Today, at 10 a.m. we were visited by four Englishmen, who asked to talk with our bosses. After they talked with them and asked them to lower the flag, they also asked us to abandon the islands. We didn't understand why, because we had all the legal documentation, including English Visas (sic), in addition to the contract for the task. After that, they talked with the ship's Captain and asked to use his radio.

Later, in absolute silence, the flag was lowered by Ruiz Diaz and me, with Terrible anger... The gringos stayed and passed the night in the Post Office building.¹⁶

Lochi also recalls the flag lowering:

...the following day, near 10 a.m., four Englishmen appeared and one of them told me, with much anger, that the flag must be lowered.¹⁷

After some internal discussions, the Davidoff representative Carlos Patané intervened:

...they were with Patané every moment. They asked for the permission papers for staying on the islands, visas and all the papers. Patané showed everything: permission papers, visas and the signed contract. In spite of this they insisted that we must leave.¹⁸

Rex Hunt of the British Antarctic Survey party recalls differently:

...approaching Leith harbour ... heard several rifle shots and saw the *Bahía Buen Suceso*... Cargo was being unloaded and there were almost fifty men ashore, some in civilian clothes and others in white military style uniforms. An Argentine flag flew from the top of the generator station ...

...two of the field party, Trefor Edwards and Neil Shaw, went aboard the *Bahía Buen Suceso* and met Captain Biatore(sic)¹⁹...In an amicable atmosphere they advised him that he should have reported first to Grytviken for clearance formalities and he replied that the British Embassy in Buenos Aires had given him permission to land at Leith and that the base commander at Grytviken should have been so notified...

Captain Biatore (sic) was relaxed and cordial in his attitude and evidently felt confident.

He offered overnight accommodation in his ship to the BAS party and said he had

a gift of fruit sent by Constantino Davidoff. Both offers were courteously refused... Edwards had a VHF set with him and relayed this information to Steve Martin (the BAS commander) at King Edward Point. (They ...) managed to pass the message to me via the *Endurance*.²⁰

Steve Martin kept in contact with *Endurance*, which had arrived at Stanley from Georgias that day, until 1a.m.

The Argentine flag, raised on its improvised pole on 18 March, 1982 on top of an old generator, is portrayed in a photograph taken the next day. The flag gravely concerned British officials, who thought it represented a threat or insult to British interests. The photo was taken by the BAS party and reported as "clandestine". The photo is reprinted in the book "Operation Paraquat".²¹

The BAS party maintained their watch through the evening, taking more "clandestine" photos and sending other reports to Grytviken. But the reports, even though the BAS members had been ordered "go to Leith to find Argentines"²², do not describe an invasion. They talked about "military style uniforms", which probably, as the pictures reveal, were winter clothes similar to military jackets that are used in many places.

To raise your national flag in another country is not a crime, even less if you are a civilian. To raise it in a disputed territory could be regarded similarly. But the British claimed that such a flag-raising in disputed territory was not acceptable.

The BAS group had been received by the Argentines without any animosity, except for Argentine anger for lowering the flag. BAS visitors spent the night among the workers, with the ship at the anchorage. Further, they had been invited to stay on board. In spite of that, they started to act in a "clandestine" mode. Nobody accounts for such strange behavior. Were they

ordered to act in that way? Who gave them such strange orders? Why?

But here is how the BAS reported the situation to Stanley:

The BAS had observed the *Bahía Buen Suceso* in Leith Harbour and a sizeable party of civilian and military personnel ashore. Shots had been heard, the Argentine flag had been raised, and a notice warning against unauthorized landings had been defaced.²³

The BAS report was largely false and totally misleading: a work crew was depicted as an invading party.

The Argentine problem, if any, could have been in proceeding directly to Leith and not checking in at Grytviken, as it the British claimed the Argentines knew they were supposed to do. Thus the British had a technical reason for calling the workers' presence illegal. Further,

the British claimed to attempt to force the party to go to Grytviken to accomplish this formality. It is interesting to point out that there was no clear version, testimony, or documentation about the official requirements related to this particular point or about the Embassy's intervention before or after December 1981, before the March voyage.

This reporting requirement is easy to describe. But carrying it out would have been absurd. In practical terms, the ship should have been forced to take port at two different sites with all the difficulties related to navigation in those waters, only for legal purposes. This would have delayed her operation over 24 hours at a minimum, depending of the administrative process and the will of BAS officials. In political terms, the reporting requirement for an Argentine Navy ship was disproportionate if it was only a matter of sealing the papers. And we now know that the Argentines attempted to address this matter before leaving their home port. Nobody was clear about the nature of the administrative formalities.²⁴

Strangely, Mr. Rex Hunt himself exonerated the Argentine Captain for not reporting at Grytviken:

More realistically, a second official pointed out to Anthony Williams that the Captain of an Argentine Naval Support vessel should not have expected to request permission to enter what Argentine law did not recognize as a foreign territory and that these problems should have been faced before the salvage contract was authorized. This is one point on which we could agree.²⁵

Nevertheless, Governor Hunt acted immediately by himself. After receiving the first BAS message while in dining with Lord Aubrey Buxton, member of Parliament and one of the most active Falkland Islands lobbyists, "coincidentally" in Stanley after a trip to Antarctica and

Georgias on board of *Endurance*, he prepared his message for the next day, strangely, without informing London that night.

Neither Buenos Aires nor London were informed about the incident. They had no knowledge that this local Governor was starting a war.

20 MARCH

Trefor Edwards was sent to the *Bahía Buen Suceso* with the Rex Hunt's message for Captain Niella. Later he and the rest of the party left Leith for Grytviken. The message stipulated:

1. You have landed illegally at Leith without obtaining proper clearance.
2. You and your party must go on board the *Buen Suceso* immediately and report

- to the base commander, Grytviken, for further instructions.
3. You must remove the Argentine flag from Leith.
 4. You must not interfere with the BAS depot at Leith.
 5. You must not alter or deface any of the notices at Leith.
 6. No military are allowed to land in South Georgia.
 7. No firearms are to be taken ashore.”²⁶

This is, without any doubt, an ultimatum, a masterpiece of colonial prepotency.

Moreover, Governor Hunt, only after he had taken such grave foreign policy action, informed London, more than 12 hours after the first BAS message had been received:

I then reported the facts and my action to the FCO (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), giving my view that the Argentine navy was using Davidoff as a front to establish an Argentine presence on South Georgia and suggesting that, since this was the second violation by Davidoff, the party should be ordered to leave South Georgia even if they report to Grytviken. Having consulted Nick Baker (*HMS Endurance* Captain), I also suggested that, if the Argentines did not comply with my instructions, *HMS Endurance* should sail to South Georgia the next day with Royal Marines embarked to ensure that the Argentines left.²⁷

Indeed, this is a remarkably brazen initiative for a relatively minor official to undertake. He delayed forwarding the information to London for 12 hours, after he had taken provocative measures, even in contradiction with his previous instructions from the Foreign Office.

He ordered the Argentines to go to Grytviken but offered no solution, suggesting instead that “the party should be ordered to leave South Georgia even if they report to Grytviken” as he instructed them. Further, he initiated military measures and suggested additional action, once again, disregarding his instructions.

Finally, he wanted to carry out military action against what he and the BAS described (not clearly) as Argentine military presence in Leith. Had he decided to enter in combat against supposed Argentine troops then? Or was it clear to him that they were only civilians and that there was no risk of confrontation? Was the suggested Argentine military presence only other false information aimed to force London to act as he intended?

Mr. Hunt urged military measures, Captain Baker agreed, and Lord Aubrey Buxton supported. We can see three men in the same plot, pressing the Government which relied only on their advice and information from an isolated region.

Mrs. Thatcher's description was very short:

On March 20 we were informed that the day before, the Argentine scrap metal workers had been disembarked again, also without authorization this time, and in Leith, in South Georgia. The Argentine flag had been raised and shots had been effectuated.²⁸

Despite such limited intelligence, there was an immediate reaction from London. The British Ambassador in Buenos Aires, Mr. Anthony Williams, phoned Ambassador Blanco and Ambassador Ros of the Argentine Foreign Affairs Ministry in the afternoon, expressing concern that Argentine personnel had disembarked in Leith harbor, had raised an Argentine flag and had changed some British signs. He contended that they should have been presented in Grytviken for migratory formalities. He also added the information about the Governor's detailed message to the Argentines, cited before.

Saturday 20, at night, Ambassador Blanco, chief of the Malvinas Direction of the Chancellery, called me and announced that he had received a phone call from Ambassador Williams, expressing that ...*Bahía Buen Suceso* ...had disembarked... civil and military (sic) personnel...Nobody in the Chancellery was expecting this episode.

This was the first information to reach the Argentine Government, as Mr. Nicanor Costa Méndez, the Foreign Affairs Ministry, wrote.²⁹

That same day it was communicated to the British Ambassador that the voyage was normal and the documentation for its purpose had been provided. The workers had the required White Cards (Communications Agreement 1 July, 1971, Art 2) and that any disposition obliged it to be sealed, vided or supervised.

That night, in a personal interview with Ambassador Blanco, Mr. Williams renewed the same exigencies, protested verbally, and stated that UK would exercise its authority and dislodge Davidoff's men. He was told that:

- 1 The *Bahía Buen Suceso* was a transport, well known by British authorities.
- 2 Davidoff had no other means than this ship to reach Georgias.
- 3 The ship would sail off Georgias on 21 March, once its cargo had been unloaded, towards other ports in Patagonia.
- 4 No military personnel had disembarked or participated in any task, because there were no military on board. The same related to weapons on shore.
- 5 If elements could had been removed on shore, it had been only to repair the jetty for unloading cargo.
- 6 The voyage and disembark were well known by the British Government through communications with the Embassy. The workers possession of White Cards made unnecessary presentation for migratory process.
- 7 In context of bilateral negotiations, these facts were not important and should have been treated at a lower diplomatic level.³⁰

The British Embassy sent a message reporting that the Argentine Government appear to be unaware of the landing and advised that great restraint should have been used.

Meanwhile, in London Minister Molteni, the Argentine Charge d' Affairs, received similar communications from Mr. Barret, a British Foreign Office representative.

The Prime Minister offered the British perspective and decisions from London in those days:

Once again the Argentine Government answered our protests saying that they had no previous knowledge of the situation.

Initially we decided that the *Endurance* must be given orders to withdraw the Argentines, whoever they were.

However, we tried to negotiate with Argentina one solution for what we continued looking as a torpidness instead an incident previous to a conflict; so we withdraw our instructions to *Endurance* and ordered the ship to put course to Grytviken, the British base and main settlement in the island.³¹

With this brief comments, the Prime Minister closed the description of what the UK considered a "grave incident" until the situation was reconsidered on March 28. She had so far a different perception of the facts ("a torpidness instead an incident"), than the aggressive Governor's point of view.

Was she aware of the real intentions of those who were provoking the incident? Was she merely trying to distance herself from the hardliners? Or was she unaware of the manipulation of the facts by the Falklands Lobby?

Great Britain escalated a minor incident, caused by different interpretations of documentation and procedures for a permanent presence in Georgias, into a major crisis by the action of a local representative, a Governor. His description of activities of Argentine civilians reported by the BAS was untrue, irrelevant and set the ground for a high level response.

Who has the right to apply any Law? The Communications Agreement was the only rule that should have applied. But there were contradictory diplomatic positions about rights of sovereignty at the center of the dispute.

Unarmed Argentine civilians in a contested territory, with the knowledge of British authorities, acting in accord with a commercial agreement, are labeled as "invaders". For Argentina this incident was an undesirable situation. According to the intentions and planning related to Malvinas and Georgias, this incident was far from being convenient. It alerted the British and attracted their attention to the area. In fact, this uncontrolled crisis played into the hands of the British hardliners, the Falklands Lobby and to the institutions that

could exploit it to their own benefit, the Royal Navy, the BAS and The Falkland Islands Company.

The BAS observers concealed themselves instead of operating in the open, which would enabled them to gather accurate information and to keep Argentines under direct control of British civilians (supposed Magistrate delegates). A closer presence could had dissipated all doubts about the Argentines and certainly avoided the employ of military means. Who gave them the order to act in this unusual way? Why? Did they act covertly only to show by all means that they where threatened or in peril, acting as spies and not as officials in supposed their own territory?

Decisions in Malvinas from Governor Hunt and in London from the Foreign Office were based on inaccurate, irrelevant and poor information from an unreliable low level single source- or even worse, on manipulated information. In spite of all these inconsistencies, they escalated immediately. Military action was on course.

Orders were given to *Endurance* on that evening:

C-in-C Fleet is sending instructions to Capt. *HMS Endurance* to leave for South Georgia at 0930 21st. March.³²

Mr Rex Hunt's post-war description of the ship's military capabilities deployed against Argentine citizens is clear:

This fine ship (*Endurance*) put paid to an Argentine submarine, knocked down two helicopters (sic. Only one: The SA-330 Puma, numbered AE 504), damaged a corvette... Not bad for an "unarmed" merchantman on her last trip.³³

In fact, the *HMS Endurance*, sailing from Stanley had the following assets: 124 men on board, plus 22 Royal Marines with SLR 7.62 mm, LMG 7.62 mm, LAW and Karl Gustav RR 84 mm. The ship was armed with 2 Oerlikon 20 mm cannons and 2 Helicopters Wasp with sixteen AS 12 missiles and with GPMG 7.62 mm. This was enough armament to deal with 39 unarmed civilians.³⁴

Saturday night in Stanley, the usual dancing party took place. After that, an unidentified Briton entered the nearest LADE (Líneas Aéreas del Estado- Staten Air Lines (Argentine)) office and draped the British flag over the Argentine one, also leaving a threat written with toothpaste. The incident was more provocation aimed to inflame the Argentine public and their leaders. This occurred in an area controlled by Governor Hunt, and it has been impossible to identify the perpetrator.

In Stanley information was received that the *John Biscoe* was ready to sail towards Malvinas with the Royal Marines new detachment from Montevideo, Uruguay.³⁵ This is

another strange coincidence that suggests deliberate provocation: military reinforcements just on time for the incoming crisis.

An exultant Mr. Hunt broke all the rules of secrecy in a social occasion at Stanley; he talked provocatively and directly to the Argentine representatives about the concealed task and destination of *HMS Endurance*, that night. This was a strange behavior from a responsible official.³⁶

The *Bahía Buen Suceso* remained at anchor in Leith, on 20 March, 1982, while disembarking material for Davidoff workers. Pictures taken "surreptitiously" by the BAS were published in Operation Paraquat.

In Buenos Aires the information reached the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the night, who mentioned he communicated the situation to the President, by phone.

On March 20, the British viewed the situation as a crisis. The level of escalation was so high that it was very difficult in the following days for them to withdraw or deescalate. The British Government, with or without collusion with Governor Hunt and his Lobby, started to lose their own freedom of action. The Argentine Government was not the only one affected by this situation.

21 MARCH

HMS Endurance sailed from Stanley towards Georgias on Sunday morning at 0845 local time. This action's message was clear. It represented a threat of British military use of force (aggression) against peaceful unarmed Argentine citizens in a disputed territory. The facts were equally clear: military action toward Argentine workers was on course. The confirmation about her departure and destination was known by the Argentine representative, Cap Gaffoglio in Stanley, the same day.³⁷ Unfortunately for Argentina, the means to prove this were not available during the crisis. There was not any single independent journalist or news agency within 2000 kilometers surrounding the area. And the UN was even farther away. In addition, the Security Council was dominated by UK veto.

In London, the FCO asked for confirmation that the Argentines on shore were civilians. A new message from the BAS party, as the BAS commander radioed, was contradictory with the alarmist message sent two days before:

...an observation party at Leith reported that the Argentine flag had been lowered, but that there was no indication that the Argentines were preparing to leave.

...that some of the Argentines were dressed in what appeared to him to be military-style clothing and had behaved in a military way, but had not carried

firearms.

Between 50 and 60 Argentines had been seen, most of them in civilian clothing. Although no firearms had been seen, further shots had been heard and reindeer had been killed, which was contrary to the provisions of Davidoff's contract.³⁸

Were things different from those they were originally instructed to expect or to describe?

ARA Bahia Buen Suceso left Leith the 21st in the evening, towards Ushuaia. The BAS party continued its concealed observation on Leith, instead of an open one. They mistook the numbers of Argentine workers remaining on the ground as 10, because they were in poor position to observe the factory. It would have been more practical to remain closer to the workers- if not with them- to discover their real number, nature, activities and intentions or whatever other information could have been required.

Simultaneously, the decision to reinforce Malvinas by doubling the Royal Marines garrison was taken in London, at request of Governor Hunt. He also sent a message urging further escalation:

I strongly recommend that *Endurance* be instructed to proceed to Leith and remove all Davidoff's men, and that Davidoff be told that he has forfeited his right to purchase scrap.³⁹

The *John Biscoe* sailed with a new Royal Marines detachment from Montevideo, Uruguay.

The BAS was required to keep covert (Why covert?) watch on Leith. They sent a two-men team by boat to Carlita Bay to establish an observation post on Jason Peak, a 733m high position, far more than 8 kilometers from their objective! In their most recent message, they reported about 30 Argentines at Leith.⁴⁰

In Buenos Aires the information was analyzed by the minister of Foreign Affairs. The British Ambassador reported the official Argentine response. He confirmed that the party and the ship would depart that day.

22 MARCH

The BAS commander reported:

...that the *Bahia Buen Suceso* had sailed from Leith and that there was no sign of the shore party.⁴¹

The French yacht *Cinc Gars Pour* left Grytviken and entered Leith to the irritation of the BAS members, who had warned the French not to do that. The yacht helped the Argentines to recover a red barge that had lost his moorings and had been driven ashore below Jason Peak during the night.

The situation, so far, revealed some symptoms of distress. The Foreign Office was analyzing the information with more objectivity than the previous days. The incident had been resolved. The Argentine ship had disappeared, the flag had been lowered and the men ashore

...were apparently nothing but labourers

...they had made a lot of noise, had frightened the animals and vandalized a notice-board.⁴²

The question, from the point of view of Lord Carrington, the British Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Richard Luce, Minister of State, was if it

...was a good idea to call the Royal Navy right away?⁴³

If there was an opportunity when the crisis could have been solved using the necessary common sense, this was certainly the moment.

In Stanley Lord Buxton sent a message to Lord Carrington reinforcing the Governor's point of view:

He judged that, if the British reaction was placatory, more illegal landing would follow. The next time on the Falkland Islands.⁴⁴

The *Endurance* received a confused message at 1530. After new communications, she was ordered to continue towards Georgias⁴⁵

In London Ambassador Molteni was called to the Foreign Office to be informed about the British position. They objected to the way the Argentines entered Georgias, announced the issue of a future communiqué, asked about the Argentine workers' withdrawal from the Islands (they had their own officials there, in position to provide accurate and real time information, but not doing so), and defined the crisis in the morning as a "silly problem" in the words of the FCO representative, Mr. Fearn.⁴⁶

In the evening everything changed. The FCO communiqué gravely altered the situation. Its title invited anger:

Falkland Islands. Illegal Argentine disembarks in South Georgia.⁴⁷

The following content, however, offered a moderate description of the actions. But the effect of the title had been enough to provoke an uncontrollable emotional reaction in the non phlegmatic British parliamentarians, media and people. Who was the author? What was the aim? This was an official document, not an article in a magazine...

In London, the evening newspaper "The Standard" displayed a sensational headline:
Invasion of the Falkland Islands.

Who wanted to escalate the conflict? Who was the responsible party for such dangerous treatment of information? The Government? The Falklands Lobby?

Meanwhile, there were tremendous difficulties in gathering information from a remote, isolated place with poor communications. The two men observation team in Jason Peak was collected by the BAS launch in the evening. In their last 24 hours of observations they saw few men working around the jetty, none of them in uniform.⁴⁸ For sure they couldn't see any people wearing uniform, since there were no military personnel among them.

On board of *HMS Endurance* both Wasp helicopters were armed and ready for action, one with sight set for the AS 12 missiles, and the other with GPMGs 7,62mm. These are specifically military measures against unarmed civilians. This is clearly aggression.⁴⁹

In Stanley, the normal Líneas Aéreas del Estado (State's Air Line) (LADE) flight arrived.

In Buenos Aires the British Ambassador went to Chancellery. He pressed to know about the supposed withdraw of the workers. He was told that the situation was not clear (British sources said yes, but probably not all. Argentine sources indicated they remained onshore). The Argentine Government could not order or force a private company to give up a contract, to abandon his base and equipment, just because the country was under threat.⁵⁰

Simultaneously, Mr. Costa Mendez protested against the assault on the LADE office in Stanley, which did not contribute to calm spirits.

After the British communiqué, Argentina expressed its position in another statement, providing the information the British were concealed.

The last BAS report informed that:

...some Argentines were still at Leith , and that a French yacht, ...had ignored his instructions...and was making contact with the Argentines.⁵¹

Captain Baker sent a signal indicating some collusion between the Argentine Navy and Davidoff, based in his interpretation of radio signals. *HMS Endurance* was ordered to continue towards Georgias.

In Buenos Aires, the Foreign Affairs Ministry confirmed to Ambassador Williams that there were personnel in Leith, but urged the British not to act forcefully.

23 MARCH

The day started in London with catastrophic headlines as:

Disembarks.

and even worst:

Invaders disembarks.

There were no other sources for information related to the facts in Georgias in the UK but the British Government. So, the responsibility for such grave distortion of information

belonged to them. Was it the PM? Was it the FCO? Was it the Falkland Lobby? In any case, all seems to be closely involved, at that stage. If not, it is impossible to explain such irresponsibility in a serious powerful country.

Captain Baker continued sending inflammatory messages, linking Davidoff's activities with some real facts and perceptions, but forcing the interpretation.⁵²

The BAS reported 10 Argentines in Leith. In fact, the whole party of 39 remained there. This is another result of the British clandestine information gathering.

In Buenos Aires the morning newspapers reported the situation with total moderation:

About a fact in Austral areas. The Foreign Ministry informed about the Argentine ship hired by a private enterpriser in South Georgia.⁵³

This was the headline of "La Prensa", in five of eight columns. Information from Argentina and UK sources was exhibited in objective terms. At this point nobody could predict the outcome.

In London ministerial approval was given to *HMS Endurance* and the Royal Marines on board to be used to remove the Argentines.⁵⁴

Mr Luce made the following statement to the House of Commons:

We were informed on 20 March by the commander of the BAS at Grytviken ... that a party of Argentines had landed at Leith... The base commander informed the Argentine party that its presence was illegal as it had not obtained his prior authority for the landing... and following our approach, the ship and most of the personnel left on 21 March (sic). However, the base commander has reported that a small number of men (sic) and some equipment remain. We are therefore making arrangements to ensure their early departure.⁵⁵

In Buenos Aires, in the morning, the British Ambassador met Mr. Ros in order to receive an account of the incident at LADE's office and to defuse the whole situation to more realistic proportions. He presented a note expressing the Ministerial resolution that *HMS Endurance* should continue to Georgias in order to remove the remaining Argentines. The surprise was total.⁵⁶

The normal Tuesday meeting of the Junta at 0930 in the "Libertador" building, site of the Army General Staff, constituted as Military Committee, responded to the crisis. Foreign Affairs Ministry joined the meeting with the recently received message from Mr. Williams. Facing the last British public demands, or the ultimatum, they realized Argentine Diplomacy and Government had little room to maneuver. Acceptance of demands or ejection by force of Argentine workers would suggest a clear surrender of Argentine rights and position about sovereignty. Resistance to the threat or defense of the workers could mean confrontation and risk of escalation. After the analysis, they decided to protect Argentine workers. Orders were

given to *Bahía Paraiso* to sail towards Georgias, and to two corvettes to take positions to be able to intercept *HMS Endurance* if she took workers on board. Admiral Lombardo was called and asked to analyze possible immediate operation over Malvinas based on previous planning.⁵⁷

The Argentine President, General Galtieri, summarized the dilemma, and the option he and the Junta had taken in those days:

The English threat of use of force against civilians in accomplishment of a commercial contract; the exigency to retire in peremptory terms – hours - the 40 (sic, 39) Argentines working in Georgias precipitated military actions which led us to the reaction on April 2nd.⁵⁸

Later, Ambassador Williams had his second meeting in the day with the Argentine Chancellor, He expressed to Mr. Costa Mendez that the presence of workers, contrary to assurances (nobody told the British such thing) left no option but to take that action. Mr. Costa Mendez gave a solemn warning about the consequences of such grave action. He requested moderation, not action carried out by *Endurance*. He urged exploration of other options.⁵⁹

The common perception of the Argentine people in those days was quite simple: "The British not only refused to transfer sovereignty, not only ceased to negotiate about the Islands, but, even more, they are threatening Argentine people in the disputed territory and also they present us an ultimatum... This is too much!"

Argentina could not accept the threat of use of military force against peaceful unarmed citizens in an illegally occupied territory that belongs to her, without reaction. The selected option for this reaction, so far, was not a high level escalation.

In spite of previous military planning, there was no time for preparation and execution of any coherent strategic plan, only for desperate reaction facing an undesired crisis, and trying to keep it under control.

The order to protect Argentine citizens was the first Argentine military decision, three days after first British movement. Also Argentina lacked the military strength to enact this decision. The ARA *Bahía Paraiso* only could pick up 14 Marines with individual automatic weapons from Thule, where they were training as preparations for a future Operation Alfa (if it could have been decided to mount during the next months). The *Bahía Paraiso*, was in her normal colors for Antarctic activities, as red as the *Endurance*, without any type of armament.

The order to deploy two corvettes from Puerto Belgrano was further canceled. Initially ordered to head south to support *Bahía Paraiso*, the two A 69 Argentine corvettes *Drummond* and *Granville* never reached the area.

On the other hand, *Endurance* received new instructions through a signal from Ministry of Defence UK to C-in-C Fleet:

In view of continued diplomatic activity at ministerial level aimed at allowing Argentine authorities an opportunity to remove party and equipment by Argentine vessel, *HMS Endurance* should proceed to Grytviken and await further instructions. Pending these instructions, *HMS Endurance* should not, repeat, not enter nor conduct any Naval operations in the vicinity of Leith harbour. In event that it should be decided that *HMS Endurance* should remove Argentines and their equipment, contingency, repeat, contingency, guidance follows by separate signals.⁶⁰

Captain Baker then informed to Governor Hunt:

I suggest that Royal Marines could now be used as an observation party...⁶¹

Simultaneously the MOD clarified the instructions:

...After giving party adequate time to get ready, CO should invite them formally to embark on board *Endurance*. It should be made clear to Argentines there is no alternative but to comply with his instructions...

Every attempt should be made to conduct operation in a friendly atmosphere and as low key as possible. Minimal physical force is to be used in order to compel Argentines to comply. ...Personal arms may be carried only if deemed necessary by CO and then used only for the purpose of self-defence. Firearms are not; repeat not, to be used to compel Argentines to comply. If armed resistance is encountered, landing party is to withdraw to the ship.

Future guidance should be sought from London.⁶²

In London, Minister of State Richard Luce was questioned in the House of Commons on the Georgias incident. The subject was given coverage in the next day's press. He said that arrangements were been made with Argentina to withdraw the workers. This was not true.

24 MARCH

London's newspapers were clear about the Government's intentions. The Daily Telegraph front page reported that *HMS Endurance* was approaching Georgias to deal with Argentines, more precisely, to eject them. The headlines were far from moderate:

Britain Sends the Royal Navy (The Guardian)

Disembarks in the Falklands Provokes Clamor in Parliament (The Times)

Sold Ships Sailing to Eject Intruders (Daily Telegraph)

The same day Lord Carrington sent a Minute to the Prime Minister and the Defence Committee about the Falklands Islands conflict, pointing out that the dispute had developed to a point where an early confrontation with Argentina seemed likely. He also added a proposed draft message to Argentina, which had been agreed to by the Falkland Island Councilors. This was a curious way for a FCO Minister to deal with a major crisis- to be summoned for agreement or approval of a highest level priority communication already accepted by local

community. Who dictates the foreign policy in UK? Was it the Government, elected by most of the people? Or was it a particular lobby representing one of the smallest minorities in the country?

The FCO Ministry also requested the Ministry of Defence to share Military Contingency Planning within the Defence Committee, in the next meeting to discuss the “Falklands crisis”.

⁶³ The crisis, so far, was focused on Georgias. The British Government was amplifying the range by was calling the situation a “Falklands” crisis.

In Georgias, *HMS Endurance* arrived at King Edward Point and Captain Baker went ashore to reunite with BAS. Finally, as he proposed, armed Royal Marines were sent ashore to observe Argentine activities from Jason Peak. This was the second military movement in the vicinity of unarmed civilians.

In Stanley the LADE flight had departed.

In Buenos Aires less than one-eighth of the front page of the newspaper La Nación referred to the situation in the South Atlantic:

Port Stanley's actions provoke energy claims. (Referred to LADE incident)

The Junta met again as Military Committee, in the morning, analyzing options. A more flexible way to protect Davidoff's men was decided:

1. Defend the Argentine workers in Georgias.
2. Do not withdraw them.
3. Disembark the team on board *Bahía Paraiso* (14 men) to protect them.
4. If arriving *Bahía Paraiso* they could had been embarked on board of *Endurance*, not to confront it. Avoid fight even if they could have been transported to Malvinas.
5. In any case, analyze the situation before intercept *Endurance* with corvettes.

The Junta devised no way to negotiate the issue of sovereignty because British intransigency. This perception was reinforced the UK intention to reinforce the Islands by military means.⁶⁴

In the same meeting, Admiral Lombardo, chief of the Malvinas planning cell, was told to specify the earliest date to act as planned, and to present his conclusions in 48 hours.

Argentine Foreign Affair Ministry received Mr. Williams to explain the position of the Government following the previous meeting. He also expressed to the Ambassador the possibility of a new way to defuse the crisis and to find a negotiated outcome. Even without Presidential approval, he suggested the option of sending the workers to Grytviken to seal the White Cards, in spite of this not being necessary within the terms of the Communications

Agreement of 1971. This was the last and supreme Argentine effort to provide a reasonable solution to the crisis, going even beyond the previous bilateral agreements.

The *John Biscoe* departed from Montevideo with Royal Marines towards Port Stanley.

The *ARA Bahía Paraiso* arrived at Leith in the night.

25 MARCH

British press stated that Nuclear Submarines had been dispatched to the South Atlantic, which constituted a new threat. Media Communications, without any possibility of verification, become facts. Aggressive headlines in the British press suggested invasion, seeking to placate hardliners. Mrs. Thatcher expressed:

I was no so much disturbed when the information filtered through.⁶⁵

The British Embassy in Buenos Aires then started destroying documents, which lasted for seven days! Who gave that order when so far there was no decision or evidence of any major Argentine military movement? Who was preparing a war?

Meanwhile Ambassador Williams met again with Mr. Costa Mendez to continue the previous day's talks. The Argentine Ministry received a personal note from Lord Carrington, expressing the public commitment of the British Government to remove Argentines from Leith, as well as the announcement of the last British effort to avoid confrontation and the acknowledgement of the Argentine proposal as an imaginative initiative.⁶⁶

Simultaneously the FCO was sending a message to the British Embassy in Washington expressing concern about the crisis and warning about a possible action in Malvinas.

The *ARA Bahia Paraiso* in Georgias disembarked her party. That was the first Argentine military presence on the island and also in the area, only fourteen marines with automatic weapons. The *Bahia Paraiso* was unarmed as were her Alouette and Puma helicopters. The Royal Marines observers could see little.

On the other hand, there were confirmations of British naval units in the area:

Endurance was in Georgias, *John Biscoe* was heading south towards Malvinas with the Royal Marines detachment, *Bransfield* was in Punta Arenas, Chile, and one (The *Superb* has been reported) or two nuclear submarines were announced moving towards Malvinas. There was also information about a new ship ordered to move towards the area; the *RFA Fort Austin* with Sea King helicopters embarked for a rendezvous with *Endurance* close to Grytviken, expected on 29 March.⁶⁷ This was a deployment of military forces. It clearly threaten use of force against Argentina in that region.

Nobody could know the real British intentions, nor the means or capabilities they could deploy. For sure, their presence as well as the information about their movements constituted a military measure.

On the contrary, in Argentina, not a single unit, except *Bahía Paraiso*, had been employed. Not a single order had been given to act, so far. The instructions to the two corvettes had been recalled after they had steamed south for 24 hours.

The second visit of Mr. Williams to Mr. Costa Mendez sunk the last opportunity for a solution. In answer to the Argentine proposal the British demanded sealed passports, which were unavailable in Georgias and unacceptable in political terms. Acceptance of this demand would disengage Georgias from the Communications Agreement of 1971, which could have been a first step to dislocate the Malvinas, Georgias and Sandwich Question in two different disputes, relinquishing Argentine sovereignty in the question. Finally, to agree with this new exigency under the threat of force was simply unacceptable.

So these demands were impossible to accomplish and unacceptable for Argentina. They were presented in order to escalate. They were designated to provoke a major incident and to blame the Argentines as aggressors, and ending all negotiations for concerning the islands, while they were reinforced. Mr. Hunt's avoidance of a quick solution was supported by British intransigence. It also opposed the British Ambassador's recommendations:

I had argued that the 1971 Communications Agreement, under which the "white cards" were issued, did not apply to South Georgia (sic) but only to the Falkland Islands, and that the proper documentation meant stamping the Argentines' passports with a normal entry permit.

...it was important to uphold the principle that the 1971 Communications Agreement did not apply to the Dependencies. (sic)⁶⁸

This dispute focus on only one UN Question, the way in which the conflict had being discussed and negotiated by common agreement. Moreover, the UK had stated clearly that Falkland Islands/Islands Malvinas means these islands and the Dependencies of South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands.⁶⁹

Mr. Costa Mendez consulted with the President about the new exigency.

In a third visit, Mr. Williams received the negative answer to the passports issue and reiteration of the Argentine offer. The Ambassador asked about *Bahía Paraiso* and was told that the ship was in protection duty. Also she was available to transport the workers to Grytviken as Argentina proposed, if this solution were agreed upon.⁷⁰

In the evening the Foreign Affairs Ministry informed the President, who then informed the Junta.

26 MARCH

In Buenos Aires the newspaper La Prensa headlined in only three columns:

No changes in the situation created by Great Britain. Measures to protect, if the case required, the task undertaken by Argentines at Leith.

The Junta members and the Foreign Affairs Ministry met again to treat the situation as Military Committee at 1915 hours. They analyzed the options:

1. Continue negotiations: About both the sovereignty question and about the Georgias incident deadlocked due to British intransigency.
2. Present the case to U.N.: It could not act effectively to deter UK, which was one of the Security Counsel Members, with right to veto.
3. Occupy Malvinas Islands: This option provided the conditions to force UK to negotiate and for the U.N. intervention - or another mediator. This action should be taken before the British reinforcements would reach the Islands. The window of opportunity was established between that date and 8 April.

The Junta decided to seize the disputed territories, thus to prevent the oncoming British military deployment and aggression and to restore the option for negotiations.

As President Galtieri remembered:

The Georgias incident anticipated all. The English pretended to force us, under threat, to withdraw 40 (sic) Argentine citizens that were working peacefully. We were put in the obligation to defend them. It was a question of dignity.

...the English action to threaten our citizens was opposed by the Argentine reaction to recover legitimately our territories.⁷¹

Admiral Lombardo presented the conclusions about planning and was ordered to proceed with Operation "Blue", setting 01 April as D Day. Subordinate commands were ordered into action. The required units started their readiness process. Full military mobilization was underway. This was the decisive point on the Argentine side. The level of escalation again was so high, that the chances for a compromise became minimal.

An improvised reaction to the crisis, based on a previously developed plan, based on questionable assumptions – under the most favorable conditions, the plan may have succeeded. In present circumstances, it could not possibly succeed.

There was no updated strategic plan; only immediately available military resources could be used. There was no time to develop any additional military or political or diplomatic measures, or to prepare coordinated efforts or means, especially in the international arena. The request to maintain secrecy to achieve the military objective with surprise implied no

previous diplomatic effort, not a single warning to build up the necessary support. Argentina was extremely vulnerable, but the risk had been taken.

Eventually, Argentine Government had made the decision, they still had the option to cancel the military operation if any agreement could be reached. They persisted with this action to the last minute. On the other hand, they wanted to avoid any delay in executing the military option, which would provide the UK the time they needed to reinforce the islands.

The British had seized the initiative, had deployed military means to the area, had reinforced the Royal Marines garrison, had sent Royal Navy units to the area, and were anticipating other military, political and diplomatic action in all fronts.

In Georgias the Observation party was moved by helicopter to Grass Island, inside Stromness Bay, about 5 kilometers south of Leith. They could see only the ship unloading.

27 MARCH

Morning news in Buenos Aires was more dramatic, consider La Nación:

Georgias: Crisis at a grave point. Ships *Bahía Paraiso*, from our Navy, and *Endurance*, from Great Britain, are in the islands' waters. Military and diplomatic offices follow the facts with increasing concern.

The first Argentine unit, the submarine *Santa Fe* sailed to sea, with an advanced party of divers.

The elements for the Amphibious Force were concentrated and embarked in Puerto Belgrano.

The British research ship *Bransfield* arrived to Port Stanley from Punta Arenas. There were no information about her activities in the area, only a reference to the party for the crew that night.

In Georgias the BAS had nothing to report, in spite of the close reconnaissance the Royal Marines did, closing the 600 meters to Leith and staying there for 45 minutes. Without radio and unable to remain in the area, the two Marines left their position. While meeting with Captain Baker on shore, they were spotted by the Argentine Alouette, attracted by the Wasp landed nearby.

In Buenos Aries Ambassador Williams met Mr. Ros, asking for an answer to the British note and the situation of *Bahía Paraiso* in Georgias, with supposed armed marines on board (sic). ⁷² He was told that the official answer to the British Government would be ready the next day. The diplomatic effort was oriented to prepare this task. Mr. Williams suspected a change in the Argentine attitude after the meeting of the day before. He informed London.

The Naval Attaché informed London about Argentine naval movements for an Argentine/Uruguayan anti-submarine exercise.⁷³

28 MARCH

In the morning, Buenos Aires newspaper Clarin headlined:

Negotiate with London the outcome of the conflict. Meanwhile, other English ship with marines sail towards Malvinas. Also the Argentine naval readiness had increased.

The Landing Force at sea in the Sunday morning.

The British Ambassador was given the Argentine reply. Mr. Costa Mendez received him and Mr. Joy and gave them the official answer to the most recent senseless British message. He reaffirmed the Argentine position on the incident, on the sovereignty issue, and rejected the "virtual ultimatum" the British gave, the menace of use of force and the broad allegations in the British press. "The workers must remain there" was the clear Argentine message. Finally, Argentina proposed to negotiate not only the current problem, but the whole sovereignty dispute, since this was the fundamental issue.

The message was sent to London. Governor Hunt charged the complicity between the Government and Davidoff. He continued being bellicose.

Lord Carrington sent a message to General (Ret) Alexander Haig, the U.S Secretary of State, describing the situation and his view that

...the Argentines were no longer interested in negotiations over the vexed question of sovereignty (sic).

He also informed Gen Haig of the presence of *Endurance* and the Argentine ships and further, he:

...outlined the possibilities for escalation, whilst maintaining the British Government resolve to seek a peaceful solution. He concluded by requesting that Al Haig intervene with the Argentines and try to persuade them to call off their Military plans.⁷⁴

After this second warning to the U.S. Government the Prime Minister telephoned Lord Carrington concerned about the British ability to respond effectively to the critical situation.

The Royal Marines left their observation post and took other at Busen Peninsula. They saw only the ship leaving.

The HMS *Endurance* reported Bahía Paraiso 15 miles off shore and possibly 12 or 18 Argentines at Leith.⁷⁵

29 MARCH

Mrs. Thatcher and Lord Carrington went to Brussels to the European Community meeting. They decided to send a nuclear-powered submarine to the South Atlantic and notify the Ministry of Defence, which answered that contingency plans had been activated and some steps had been taken during the past weekend.

The *RFA Fort Austin* had sailed south from Gibraltar. One submarine could reach the Malvinas by 13 April and a second would be prepared. Admiral Woodward was ordered to detach a group of ships from Gibraltar and be ready to proceed south if required. That implied a full British mobilization to the South Atlantic, able to be there within two weeks. Argentine assumptions about the window of opportunity proved to be correct.

At midday, Mr. Luce advised Lord Carrington that any resumption of talks before a solution of the Georgias crisis would look as if the Government were negotiating under duress.

The Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the President about the meeting with Mr. Williams the day before.

The Ambassador in Buenos Aires reported news about naval movements.

The last Argentine ship for the operation was at sea. The corvette *ARA Guerrico*, which was in dry-dock until the 28th, sailed towards Georgias with 30 marines on board.

The evening newspaper *La Razón* in Buenos Aires headlined:

Gravity of the conflict with Great Britain in Malvinas accentuated.

The *John Biscoe* arrived to Port Stanley at 6.30 p. m. with the Royal Marines Detachment. The *Bransfield* sailed to Punta Arenas, later.

In Washington, the British Ambassador was preparing for U.S. involvement in the dispute, insisting that the United States could not be neutral in case of illegal occupation of British territory. Simultaneously, he requested additional U.S. mediation on the Georgias incident.

Ambassador Molteni asked Mr. Fearn for a response to the Argentine message and proposed a positive response from the British Government to future negotiations. He was told that such suggestions would be difficult for the British Government to accept.

Finally, intelligence sources warned London about Argentine full-scale movements to the South Atlantic. Surprised by the fast Argentine reaction, which was not expected according the previous intelligence reports and appraisals; the British Government had now little to do.

Even when evidences showed that some forces had been alerted more than a week before and some activities had taken place in order to send reinforcements to Malvinas, time and distance forestalled any solution.⁷⁶

Now they were acting against time. Argentine had gained initiative for the first time during the crisis, but only at the highest price of a major escalation.

The previous intelligence assessments had stated for years that the conflict would escalate slowly if negotiations fail. All such estimates were based on deliberate Argentine action in the face of diplomatic deadlock. All prognostications called for long-term and progressively increasing measures. They expected to have time to reinforce the Islands before the Argentine operation.⁷⁷

But this crisis was different. The UK initially escalated quickly and Argentina had responded, not in the expected slow process, but by jumping to the last step in less than a week.

Mr. Hunt and Lord Buxton's evaluation proved to be erroneous:

We both thought, however, that a full-scale military action against the Islands was unlikely until other forms of pressure had been exhausted. The logical scenario was deadlock in the talks; international action at the United Nations; diplomatic and commercial reprisals and then, military invasion.⁷⁸

30 MARCH

In London, Lord Carrington conferred in the FCO to analyze the situation. He, Mr. Luce and their collaborators decided to request Buenos Aires to send an emissary with the idea of resuming negotiations once the Georgias problem had been defused. They sent the message in the morning. Curiously, their tone had changed and they revealed flexibility to negotiate which was unacceptable the day before. It appeared as if they anticipated the imminent Argentine reaction.

In the morning, La Nación from Buenos Aires, headlined:

Expectative about a British decision. Lord Carrington will present the actions his Country would adopt today. Argentine diplomatic circles assured reciprocity of procedures.

The normal LADE flight landed at Stanley Airport in the morning.

In Buenos Aires and other cities a strong social protest triggering grave incidents was developing in the afternoon. It had been prepared against the Government to expose long-standing social and economic problems. It was not part of any deception plan. It had no relation to the crisis in the South Atlantic.

The Argentine Ambassador in the United States phoned Mr. Costa Mendez in advance about a request from the U.S Ambassador in Buenos Aires. The information was given to the President in a meeting with other members of the Junta.

President Galtieri met the U.S. Ambassador, Mr. Schauldeman and was told about the U.S. decision to provide help in order to solve the crisis in Georgias. The President accepted the mediation offer. He expected the U.S. action to persuade the British to negotiate the sovereignty issue, which was the main Argentine concern. The Ambassador was informed on the current situation as well.

In the Chancellery the situation was evaluated and later the Junta was briefed about the meeting with the U.S. Ambassador.

Lord Carrington and Mr. Luce made respective statements to the House of Lords and the House of Commons to explain the situation. Later the FCO Ministry expressed his displeasure with the U.S. response, which put the UK and the Argentine positions at the same level.

New communications from the British Naval Attaché reported naval movements; contradictory versions were received in London.

The Ministry of Defence was briefed about the movements of the Argentine ships reported in exercises 900 miles north of Malvinas. A full appraisal had also been presented. A second submarine had received the order to follow the first. A third submarine had been selected to continue the build-up of forces. The Prime Minister was informed about all this measures by a Memo from Lord Carrington and Mr. Blaker, Minister of State, Armed Forces. She described their perceptions:

None of us expected an invasion on the Falklands.⁷⁹

A second message was sent from Lord Carrington to Mr. Costa Mendez to Buenos Aires, trough the British Embassy. The Ambassador proposed to delay the message and any other offers, awaiting to outcome of U.S. efforts to mediate. He also reported the impressions of the U.S. Ambassador related to the meeting.

Lord Carrington traveled to Israel. Malvinas had less importance, for sure.

The *HMS Endurance* continued watching *ARA Bahía Paraiso* during the morning. In the afternoon, her Captain received orders to proceed to Stanley. The Royal Marines were disembarked, with instructions to defend Grytviken. The ship sailed unnoticed in the darkness.

31 MARCH

Lord Carrington initially accepted the suggestion of the British Ambassador to delay the message, but later he decided that it should have been delivered. Mr. Costa Mendez was visited by the Ambassador and received the message which proposed to send a personal emissary to Buenos Aires, Mr. Ure, with proposals for a solution that allowed Davidoff to continue his contract and defused Georgias as a preparatory step to resume dialogue on the broad issues considered in New York. Could this proposal have been taken seriously? Or was the last intent to buy time for the reinforcement of the Islands?

In London, one of the most accurate and realistic evaluations was disseminate within the British Government. The "Falkland Islands-the incident on South Georgia" assessment described the situation almost perfectly.⁸⁰ In London the Ministry of Defence received a briefing about the imminent Argentine movement on the Malvinas Islands. He reported to the Prime Minister. Both drafted a message to President Reagan, sent 2100 hours, local time. It informed the U.S. about the imminence of an invasion of the Malvinas and asked for an urgent talk with the Argentine government. It also sought to assure Argentina that the British Government would have "not escalate the dispute".

Ambassador Molteni sent a message with detailed information of public sources about British military movements.

In Buenos Aires the newspaper La Prensa headlined:

The Chancellor ratified the Argentine position in the conflict. He declared, "Our Government does not yield to any pressure", referred to the protection given to Argentine workers in Georgias. The crisis is "potentially dangerous", Carrington said.

The British Naval Attaché disclosed that virtually all the Argentine fleet was at sea. The Ambassador's report to London was based on media sources.

LADE flight departed from Stanley, normally, in the morning.

The FCO informed the British Ambassador in Buenos Aires and the Governor in Stanley about a possible operation. *HMS Endurance* was ordered back to Stanley. In the evening the Ambassador delivered the message to Mr. Costa Mendez.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs instructed Ambassador Roca, representative to U.N., to present the case in the Security Council. This was the only diplomatic effort to support a negotiated option.

01 APRIL

Argentina responded to Lord Carrington's proposal, considered the incident over and expressed the workers' right to be there. Again it reaffirmed the need to solve the whole problem of sovereignty and pointed out that in facing the British military movements to South Atlantic, U.N. intervention had been requested.

United Nations presented a resolution calling for not escalation.

The FCO informed the Ambassador in Buenos Aires and the Governor in Stanley about the imminence of action on Malvinas. London and Stanley were impotent while the Argentine fleet started approaching the islands, changing course east at 2.30 p.m. The message was received in Port Stanley at 3.30 p.m., warning Governor Hunt about the possible landings on 2 April and suggesting to him:

You will wish to make your dispositions accordingly.

In political and strategic terms that was a Check Mate for the Thatcher Government. She desperately needed to save the face, blaming others in the Government. Even Hunt was blaming London, after weeks of enflamed spirits, when he realized that was facing the results of his provocations as the Argentine Forces were approaching Malvinas.

The U.S. Ambassador in Buenos Aires interviewed Mr. Costa Mendez in the morning and President Galtieri in the afternoon with the same conciliatory message about the Georgias' crisis. The Argentine President insisted on the need for the British to discuss sovereignty. After that meeting, the U.S representative met the British Ambassador to inform.

In London forces were put on full alert to deploy south and respond. Submarines *HMS Oracle* and *HMS Splendid* sailed south. It was night.

In Malvinas the first Argentine commandos, led by Lt Bernardo Schweizer, went ashore south of Port Stanley, at 10 p.m. They secured the beach for the rest of the Comandos Anfibios (Amphibious Commandos) unit. The clock of History starts ticking...

President Reagan considered intervention. He talked with President Galtieri at 10.15 p.m. It was too late to react.

02 APRIL

The Comandos Anfibios Group reached the Royal Marines Barracks at Moody Brook before dawn, finding them empty.⁸¹ One small Comandos Anfibios patrol, detached from the beaches, simultaneously reached the Governor's House, where the Royal Marines and other forces had been concentrated. With a display of courage and determination, the 16-man team, with light armament, even with the Commanding Officer, Captain Pedro E. Giachino fatally

wounded and with two more wounded men, managed to block the 33 Royal Marines, the 12 Endurance party members, one Falklands Island Defense Force (FIDF) defender, and also the Governor. They surrendered in the morning to Argentine forces.

It is interesting to point out that the FIDF did not answer the Governor's call to arms as expected, even by the Argentine Intelligence. Only few were armed. They did not seriously resist at any place.

After 149 years of British occupation, the Islands were again under the Argentine flag. Territorial integrity had been archived. This would last only for 74 days. But this was enough to show the Argentine determination to accomplish the permanent desired objective, the recognition of Argentine sovereignty over the Malvinas, Georgias and Sanwich del Sur islands.

In Georgias, Argentine workers and Marines celebrated the recovery of Malvinas. The re-conquest of Grytviken would wait for the *Guerrico*, still approaching in the afternoon.⁸²

The UN passed the Resolution 502, not adhered by Great Britain even today. The same applied to all previous and further Resolutions.

The British then reacted to save the Thatcher Government: Lord Carrington became the convenient scapegoat. With Mrs.Thatcher's popularity declining and the unexpected humiliation from their own errors and bad intentions, they wagered on a military solution.

They escalated to a full military commitment. Only a military victory could save the Thatcher Government. Nothing less than this was acceptable. Britain could never accept that her own weakness had been put to light. And British prestige, so difficult to measure, had been smashed with the pictures of British Royal Marines surrendering in Stanley.

The Georgias' trap had worked; Argentina had fired the first shot (in spite of the first military use of force by Great Britain whose aggression, ten days before, was ignored by all). But the mouse had reacted faster and stronger than desired, seizing Malvinas. Now the cat had been put in a dangerous and ridiculous position worldwide...

03 APRIL

Georgias had been reoccupied after a bloody clash left three Argentines dead.

After that date, there was no time for peace. The Haig mediation in April, the Belaunde peace plan in May, the UN efforts in June, all had been designed to fail because Mrs. Thatcher would not accept anything less than a military victory. Even knowing that there are no genuine military solutions to any conflict, she needed it to justify her mistakes, to save her job as Prime Minister, and to blame others for her failure. Anything less than a military victory

meant a defeat. She worked frantically for that victory. But she did not solve the conflict. It is still there.

The cornerstone she pretended to introduce in all the proposals after 2 April, the British islander's "wishes" as the decisive point in any sovereignty process, was aimed to compel Argentina to reject this assumption and thus appear as the intransigent party in the conflict. She pretended to conquer Argentina by diplomacy or force. Facing that inexorable option, Argentina preferred the second.

The Argentine strategy of occupy territory for further negotiations during the crisis proved to be inadequate in opposition to the British resolution for a military victory. Absence of diplomatic support in a coordinated action was clearly visible and offered a great advantage to the adversary.

The assumptions on the Argentine Plan were far from reality, and they were discussible even before the crisis started. Moreover, once it was developed without diplomatic preparation, these assumptions were absolutely senseless.

In spite of the wrongs and rights and of the different interpretations related to the results of the war, Argentina was successful, not in keeping the Islands under her control. But even in defeat, she could keep the conflict alive, showing the importance and determination of the sovereignty question and avoiding the consolidation desired by British maneuvering. Further UN resolutions came, the first only five months after the war was ended. The current state of negotiations has proved that the Argentine cause remains alive and well. Great Britain has not deprived the Argentines of a just historic claim, which will in time be validated.

CONCLUSIONS

In 1982, both governments made common mistakes in pursuit of National interests. But personal or political objectives also intervened. Both parties failed to appreciate and correctly evaluate the position, the capabilities and determination of the adversary. Both intended to control the situation under their terms and conditions, at the desired escalation level, but failed to predict or prevent the adversary's overreaction in each case. Both estimated they had enough force to deter the other at each step of escalation, and failed again. Both were more concerned for their own public opinion and the reaction of international community than for the adversary's reaction.

In Great Britain a pressure group, formed by people concerned about their own personal or group interests, provoked a major crisis based on inexact or false information resulting in unacceptable demands. The situation was escalated dramatically in hours by the deployment

of an armed British naval force and the threat of the use of the force against unarmed Argentine civilian workers in a perfectly normal commercial activity in a disputed territory.

The incident produced only negative results in Argentina. Contingency plans were far from complete and other preparations were lacking. There was no time to act on the diplomatic front to prepare or support any military action. Everything had to be done after the incident erupted. The unexpected situation had to be dealt with by total improvisation, by reaction instead of initiative. There was no space for future negotiations or gradual pressure. The Argentine government was faced with a very difficult dilemma: to yield to British demands, even the potential use of force against unarmed Argentine citizens in a disputed territory, or to react to the threat with force. The incident was used to provoke Argentina by forcing her to react against a military pressure with military action of her own.

Those who provoked such problems pretended to create a serious incident that allowed UK to end the talks about sovereignty in the U.N. and to ignore its Resolutions. This effectively closed definitively the diplomatic way to recover Argentine sovereignty over the disputed territories by peaceful means.

Simultaneously, the incident could have been used as a pretext to increase the forces, mainly naval, and expenditures for the defense of the Islands. This would have closed the military way in pursue of the Argentine objective, through a strong defensive deployment.

And, of course, these groups pretended to keep such incident under control in the desired time, place and way, avoiding any major surprise in form of any major military action from Argentina in Malvinas.

The Argentine reaction to protect her citizens in Georgias was convenient to the British, serving for their purpose. They had fostered the incident, but they did not expect the Argentine action toward Malvinas Islands in such short time (two weeks, from March 20 to April 02). The British believed that once the incident had erupted, they would have the required time to reinforce the Islands before any important Argentine operation, as the Franks Report repeatedly suggests.

When the British Government realized that the Argentine reaction was not a gradual escalation but a major immediate military action in order to regain Malvinas, they panicked.

The entire trap that they had set up was now acting against their interests and expectations. A real Argentine success was the least desired scenario for Mrs. Thatcher and her Government. The humiliation of the surrender on 2 April was not part of the plot, as the newspaper The Guardian reflected on 3 April, 1982:

The Government last night rounded off all day of spectacular military and diplomatic

humiliation with the public admission by the Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, and the Defence Secretary, Mr. John Nott that Argentina had indeed captured Port Stanley while the British Navy lay too far away to prevent it.

For Argentina, the Georgias incident destroyed all possibility of a deliberated, concerted political and military action aimed to put pressure for negotiations, as originally had been conceived.

The initiative had been lost between March 20 and 26. The Argentine government was always responding behind British movements, even when it decided to send troops (14 men) to protect Davidoff's workers. The 26 March decision altered all their own expectations and those of the adversary. They gained initiative by an audacious combination of local tactical superiority and quick action.

The other options at hand, instead of the developed course of action, could have been effective or not, such as addressing the threat in Georgias with political or diplomatic measures. The UN reaction before and after 2 April reflected the possibilities: the Argentine position was overwhelmed by British diplomacy, as well as dispelling any possibility of peaceful solution during the war, because of the British right to veto in the Security Council. The situation could have been easily ended without any cost to UK, and the Malvinas dispute could have vanished from the international arena, without notice.

The chosen option led to the war. But probably, it was the only available means to show the dramatic importance of the main issue, sovereignty, and to show to the international community the decision to defend the Argentine rights. As the former adversary Mr Rex Hunt wrote in 1992:

There was little world interest in the Falkland Islands before 1982.⁶³

In spite of the outcome of the war, the Argentine position remained firm and the UN Resolutions supported her position, even as early as only five months after the war had ended.⁶⁵

Negotiations are still open and the issue is not forgotten, in spite of the "sovereignty umbrella" in place since diplomatic relations were restored in 1990.

The pursuit of the sovereignty over Malvinas, Georgias del Sur and Sandwich del Sur Islands by peaceful means is a permanent and irrevocable objective for the Argentine Nation, as was stated in her Constitution, since 1994.⁸⁴

This was the permanent Argentine aspiration in the past, even when Argentina was aggressed and forced to fight.

Twenty years is enough time to learn the lessons, not only from this conflict, but from others all around the World. It is time to show maturity, common sense, imagination, and good faith. It is time to carry out all the UN Resolutions and to start talking seriously about the central aspect of the issue, sovereignty.

Hong Kong, recovered by China five years ago, and the Gibraltar dispute, in the process of being solved within a year, as Spain and UK agreed in November 2001, are clear precedent for a real policy. In both cases, British population (by far larger than the Malvinas one) has received the proper treatment to protect their interests after the transference. But in both cases, their wishes could not obstruct nor dictate the foreign policy of UK. This is realism, the same that should be applied to Malvinas to solve one of the latest colonial disputes, and to shut the open door to the conflict.

If Argentina and the UK are able to find a reasonable solution to the conflict, satisfactory for both countries, the blood of all men, Argentine and British, who fell in 1982, not only fighting for their countries' interests, but also because political miscalculations, incompetence and personal failings of some of their leaders - their sacrifice should not have been in vain.

WORD COUNT: 15.182

ENDNOTES

¹ Colonel David Jewett was an US-born Captain in service with the Argentine Navy. With his frigate *Heroina* he took possession of the Malvinas Islands for the United Provinces in Port Soledad, November 6, 1820, in presence of about 50 fishing and whaling ships, among them British (6) and American (6). The information was published, among others, by the Salem Gazette (US) and the Redactor from Cadiz (Spain).

² Referencies in Robert W. Love, History of the U.S. Navy Volume One 1775-1941 (Harrisburg: Stackpole Books, 1992), 159 and in Julius Goebel, The Struggle for the Falklands. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982), 438.

³ Nicholas Baker, Beyond Endurance (London: Leo Cooper, 1987), 23.

⁴ UN Resolutions 1514; 2065; 3160; 31/49; 502; 505; 37/9; 38/12; 39/6; 40/21; 41/40; 42/19; and 43/25.

⁵ UN Resolution 2353 (1968) stated that: "Any colonial situation which partially or completely destroys the national unity and territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the UN and especially with paragraph 6 of Resolution 1514 (XV) of the General Assembly." "Declares the holding of the referendum of 10th September 1967, by the administering Power to be a contravention of the provisions of General Assembly Resolution...with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples." "Invites the Governments of Spain and the UK...to resume without delay the negotiations...to putting an end to the colonial situation in Gibraltar and to safeguarding the interests of the population upon termination of that situation."

⁶ Lord Franks, Falklands Islands Review Report of a Committee of Privy Counsellors (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1983), 24.

⁷ Baker, 126.

⁸ Franks, 48

⁹ References in Franks, 49 and Rex Hunt, My Falklands Days (Devon: David & Charles, 1992), 182

¹⁰ Jorge Palomar, Habla el Capitan del Bahía Buen Suceso (The Captain of Bahía Buen Suceso Talks), Gente [People], Buenos Aires, 1 April 1982), 4.

¹¹ Jorge Palomar, Cómo empezó la Guerra en las Georgias (How the war started in Georgias), Gente, Buenos Aires, 24 March 1983), 4.

¹² Palomar, Habla..., 4.

¹³ Palomar, Cómo..., 4.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ The list of Argentine workers in Leith, as it was known by the British Embassy, was published in the newspaper La Nación, Buenos Aires, 27 March, 1982, 14.

¹⁶ Palomar, Cómo..., 4.

¹⁷ Ibid., 4.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Captain Biatore does not exist. It is a name given by the British to the *Bahía Buen Suceso*'s Captain Osvaldo Marcelo Niella. Probably this is a misinterpretation of a non English name.

²⁰ Hunt, 182

²¹ Roger Perkins, Operation Paraquat, (Chippenham: Picton Publishing Limited 1986), 48. It is interesting to point out that this book has a paragraph in blank with the label: "Censored by the Ministry of Defence," at page 52.

²² BAS Diaries, captured in Grytviken on April 3, 1982.

²³ Franks, 49, summarizes Governor Hunt's information to the FCO. There is not a single complete documentary transcription of the original BAS message, only different second-hand versions. Mr. Rex Hunt, in My Falklands Days describes the situation, but does not mention the exact message he received. Operation Paraquat has the information's same treatment. Mrs. Margaret Thatcher in My Downing Street years' version is even shorter. The first British communications during the crisis remained unknown 20 years after it had been transmitted.

²⁴ The first instruction given by Governor Hunt expressed vaguely "proper clearance." His second position was that "the party should be ordered to leave South Georgia even if they report to Grytviken". His third position was that "passports should be sealed". They could be Argentine passports or Ad Hoc papers provided by the BAS in Grytviken. The British Government initially requested the papers be sealed in Gryviken and then changed to passports, as Mr. Hunt did. But when the Argentine reaction was evident and imminent, on March 30, Lord Carrington proposed to allow Davidoff to continue in Georgias, without any exigency about papers. The British Embassy in Buenos Aires had not done anything to clarify the requirement of papers before the two voyages were started, and initially accepted the Argentine information related to the White Cards. The Argentine Government provided the White Cards as the Communications Agreement of 1971 stated, and maintained that it was not necessary to seal them. Later, on March 25, Argentina proposed to seal them in a last attempt to save the negotiations.

²⁵ Hunt, 189.

²⁶ Ibid., 187.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Thatcher, 176.

²⁹ Costa Mendez, 107.

³⁰ Ibid., 113.

³¹ Thatcher, 176.

³² Baker, 134.

³³ Ibid., Foreword by Sir Rex Hunt, XIV

³⁴ Baker, in pages 29 to 31, 75 and photos and Rogers, page 56 and Chapter IV describes these capabilities.

³⁵ The Royal Marines had arrived in Montevideo from UK by air, as was usual in those years.

³⁶ Costa Mendez, 118.

³⁷ Virginia Gamba, El peón de la Reina (The Queen's foot soldier), (Buenos Aires, Ed Sudamericana, 1984), 130.

³⁸ Franks, 50.

³⁹ Baker, 137.

⁴⁰ Hunt, 190.

⁴¹ Franks, 51.

⁴² Perkins, 51.

⁴³ Ibid., 51.

⁴⁴ Franks, 52.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 52.

⁴⁶ Costa Méndez, 120.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 122.

⁴⁸ Perkins, 50.

⁴⁹ Baker, 137.

⁵⁰ Costa Méndez, 123.

⁵¹ Franks, 51.

⁵² Ibid., 52.

⁵³ La Prensa, Buenos Aires, March 23, 1982, 1.

⁵⁴ Franks, 52.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Costa Méndez, 129.

⁵⁸ Roque Escobar, Galtieri da la Cara (Galtieri shows the Face), Siete Días, 15 September 1982, 3.

⁵⁹ Franks, 52 and Costa Mendez, 131 relates the circumstances of such a grave moment.

⁶⁰ Baker, 137.

⁶¹ Ibid, 138.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Franks, 55.

⁶⁴ Costa Méndez, 142.

⁶⁵ Thatcher, 176.

⁶⁶ Costa Méndez, 146.

⁶⁷ Baker, 143.

⁶⁸ Hunt, 193.

⁶⁹ See communication from the UK to the Secretary General, U.N. 12 June 1970. Describing the Falkland Islands the British Government expressed: "Comprises the Falkland Islands Dependencies, included South Georgia..."

⁷⁰ Costa Méndez, 149.

⁷¹ Daniel Hadad, Galtieri recuerda sin ira y mantiene sus banderas (Galtieri remembers without anger and keeps his flags) Somos (We are), Buenos Aires,

December, 1986, 18.

⁷² The 14 Argentine marines were on shore since 25 March. Again the lack of accurate information on the ground is evident.

⁷³ The exercise had been planned, but due to the crisis was used as a deception plan.

⁷⁴ Baker, 151.

⁷⁵ In fact there were the 39 workers and the 14 marines, a total of 53. The British never had accurate information about Leith, even when BAS were there and they lost control in spite of BAS surveillance and Royal Marines reconnaissance. Probably they did not need detailed, accurate and updated information to mount the incident and to manage the crisis.

⁷⁶ Sea Harrier Squadron 801 had been on alert the previous two weeks, as explained in "Sharkey " Ward, Sea Harrier over the Falklands (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1992), 20 and 23.

Admiral Sandy Woodward and Patrick Robinson, Los cien días. (The hundred days) (Buenos Aires, Editorial Sudamericana, 1992), 86 stated a similar situation since 26 March.

⁷⁷ Franks, 26.

⁷⁸ Hunt, 190.

⁷⁹ Thatcher, 177.

⁸⁰ Franks, 66.

⁸¹ It is necessary to express that the attack on Moody Brook Barracks was merely an intimidator fire aimed to block the garrison inside the buildings, covering the approaches. Nobody would have been hurt if the Royal Marines had been inside. The buildings, contrary to British versions, were untouched and remained in such condition, used by Argentine forces until they were hit by air and artillery British fire during the actions between 11-14 June 1982. Finally they were completely destroyed by fire in the early hours of 14 June, after they had been abandoned by Argentine forces.

⁸² The Argentine flag was raised by Argentine Marines in camouflage battle dress in Leith on 2 April 1982. Some of the workers they were protecting appear in the back of the picture taken by one of the workers. One of them was wearing a white winter dress and had a plastic helmet on his hand. Probably they were the "suspected military men" reported for the BAS party on March 20 because of their "white uniforms" (sic). The 2 April ceremony was also filmed by the crew of the French vessel, accidentally on port, and later used and reported by the British in his films as the first flag that had been raised on March the 18th and 19th and as prove of the "initial military invasion" (sic).

The picture was published in Como empezó la Guerra en las Georgias (How the war started in Georgias), Gente, Buenos Aires, 24 March 1983.

⁸³ Hunt, 8.

⁸⁴ UN Resolution 37/9; 4 November 1982.

⁸⁵ Constitución de la Nación Argentina. Disposiciones transitorias. Primera.

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